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ABSTRACT

The case study is designed to be used with the inservice training program developed by the Child-Centered Inservice Training and Technical Assistance Network (Syracuse, New York), which provides services to professional and paraprofessional personnel working with students with severe disabilities receiving their education in regular education schools. Larry, an 8-year-old boy with autism and severe behavior problems, attends a special education class located in a regular school. Information is provided on the student and program, intervention needs, and functional analysis. The intervention plan for Larry addressed four areas of need: (1) coping with transitions; (2) refusal to perform instructional tasks; (3) poor management of free time; and (4) inadequate social and communication skills. Ecological, curricular, and consequential strategies were employed. The frequency of his excess behavior decreased and his self-help, functional academic, communication, and social skills increased over the course of the school year. Contains 5 references. (DB)

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LARRY

A Case Study in Educational Consultation to Support Integrated Educational Placements for Students with Disabilities and Challenging Behavior

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Introduction

The Child-Centered Inservice Training and Technical Assistance Network was designed to help support integrated educational placements for students with severe disabilities and challenging behaviors. Each year, the project provided consultants to work with the school professional staff providing services for up to 15 target students with severe disabilities who were receiving their education in regular education schools. Consultants -- who were Ph.D.'s or doctoral students in special education or school psychology -- were available for on-site inservice training and technical assistance on a weekly basis throughout the school year. Their role was to facilitate problem-solving and to help design, implement, and evaluate a comprehensive intervention plan incorporating positive, educationally-focused strategies to remediate student needs. All interventions were conducted by existing program staff.

For more information on the intervention approach, see Evans and Meyer (1985) and Janney and Meyer (1988a). A more complete description of the steps in the consultation model is provided in Janney and Meyer (1988b).

LARRY

Student and Program Summary

Larry is an eight-year old boy who has been labeled autistic. In the fall of 1986, he began attending a self-contained special education class located in a regular education school in his home school district. The program was new to the school, which had not previously served any students with moderate or severe disabilities. The other five students in Larry's class had mild to moderate mental retardation. The program was staffed by a teacher and two assistants, one of whom had been hired as a one-to-one assistant for Larry.

Though Larry received instruction in some functional skills, much of it was isolated from natural routines and contexts. For example, signing instruction took place during a morning "skills" time and during one-to-one sessions with the speech and language therapist. However, Larry was not consistently prompted to use signs when he was trying to communicate something during, for example, snack or recess. Larry would use manual signs for "cracker," "drink," and "ball" when cued, and communicated other preferences by throwing or pushing things he didn't like, grabbing things he wanted, and tugging on an adult's arm or gesturing for things he wanted which were out of reach.

Larry's one domestic skill routine -- washing dishes--required him to carry the morning's snack dishes to a home economics room in the basement at two o'clock in the afternoon. Many of his other instructional sessions focused on the acquisition and practice of pre-academic and fine motor skills (e.g., sorting and identifying objects by color, shape or size; puzzles; cutting with scissors; coloring), and utilized a massed trial format.

Larry was integrated with typical peers only at lunch in the cafeteria, where he ate when typical students his age were eating, but sat at a table with his classmates and a classroom assistant.

Intervention Needs and Functional Analysis

At referral in October, 1986, Larry's teacher and the school principal were concerned about several of Larry's behaviors, including aggression (hitting, scratching, and kicking others), throwing objects, and almost daily tantrums during which he would cry, scream, and refuse to move. Other behaviors of concern to the teacher were Larry's staring at the ceiling and his hand posturing. His great attraction to brightly colored pictures was also descibed as a problem, because he would stand and stare at pictures on the doors of other classrooms or bulletin boards in the hall, and sometimes tear them.

The intervention being used was to increase adult supervision of Larry; an adult was never far from his side. A bookcase had been bolted to the floor in a corner of the classroom to create a time-out area. When Larry had a tantrum or was aggressive, he was physically assisted to the time-out area, where he was required to stay until calm--often up to 20 minutes.

Larry's teacher was uncertain which antecedents precipitated Larry's excess behaviors, though she did pinpoint using the stairs as a predictably difficult time. The classroom was located on the second floor of the school, with long flights of stairs connecting it with the entrance on the first floor and the cafeteria and the gym in the basement. Larry had to use the stairs an average of five times per day. The teacher noted that dismissal was regularly difficult; often, two adults would pull Larry by his arms to get him to the school bus.

The consultant hypothesized that problems with the environment were maintaining and even exacerbating Larry's excess behaviors. Larry was observed to have difficulty coping with transitions in general, and he disliked loud noises and confusion. Therefore, using the stairs when the halls were noisy and full of commotion was doubly difficult for him. Larry also performed poorly and displayed challenging behaviors during massed trial instructional sessions. It was as if he could not understand the purpose of doing a task more than once.

Figure 1 shows the complete intervention plan developed for Larry. The plan addressed four areas of need: 1) coping with transitions; 2) refusing to perform instructional tasks; 3) poor management of free time; and 4) inadequate social and communication skills.

The general focus of the intervention plan was to avoid problems by providing Larry with a predictable and structured daily routine, and to teach him positive ways to communicate his wants and needs. Initially, ecological strategies such as rearranging Larry's schedule so there were fewer times he needed to use the stairs were implemented. The plan also incorporated programmatic changes such as teaching more functional skill routines, embedding instruction in communication skills within those routines, and designing more opportunities for Larry to learn to interact with his peers.

The time-out procedure being used was not an effective strategy. It actually reinforced Larry's tantrums by allowing them to work as a way to escape from situations he didn't like. The new plan to address Larry's tantrums on the stairs called for sitting with him until he calmed down and then using physical prompts (a hand on his back or arm) and gestures to get him down the stairs. In the case of emergency situations where it was imperative to get Larry down the stairs quickly, the male

Figure 1
Intervention Plan

Student: Larry
Date: Jan., 1987

INTERVENTION NEEDS	INTERVENTION PLAN: ECOLOGICAL	INTERVENTION PLAN: CURRICULAR	CONSEQUENTIAL
1. Lies on floor, screams, refuses to move. Tends to occur during transitions, especially when required to use school stairs. Purpose seems to be avoidance.	Adjust schedule so fewer times he needs to use stairs Avoid "down time" preceding transitions. Use picture schedule so he knows what comes next. Provide opportunities to be in hall and on stairs during low demand times (e.g., walk to library, get a drink of water).	Objective of using picture schedule to follow routines, manage time.	Stay calm and do not talk about the behavior. Do use physical and gestural prompts to get him moving. Verbally encourage any effort on his part. One person should follow through. John will carry him down stairs in an emergency.
2. Pushes, throws, tears material, and sometimes hits staff person working with him. Purpose seems to be avoidance of non-preferred tasks and task structures, e.g., non-functional tasks and massed trial instruction.	Avoid massed trials, especially of acquired skills. Incorporate more functional skill routines in all domains. Structured tasks (i.e., what he has to do is clear) that must be completed to have choice time. Keep work space free of extraneous materials.	Objective of using pictures to indicate choice of 2-3 leisure activities at choice time. Objective of using picture directions to prepare 3 simple snacks and set table for snack.	Interrupt by controlling materials, removing extra materials. If necessary, position yourself to avoid hits. Remain calm and do not talk about the behavior. Redirect using gestures and partial physical prompts. Give concrete goals (e.g., "Let's do 2 move"). Give verbal and physical encouragement for any attempt to participate. Have him pick up materials only at <u>end</u> of session.

Figure 1, cont.

INTERVENTION NEEDS	INTERVENTION PLAN: ECOLOGICAL	CURRICULAR	CONSEQUENTIAL
3. Difficulties managing free time: throws toys in air, flaps hands, stares at objects and hands as a way to play.	Avoid unstructured "down time": Schedule free time when choice of activities is available.	objective of learning conventional way to play 2 independent leisure activities.	Use gestures (model conventional use of materials) and partial physical prompts to redirect to the activity.
4. Other social-communication needs:			
A. Does not initiate or respond to contact from peers.	Structure opportunities for contacts with peers into his day (e.g., arrival, lunch, recess, departure).	Objectives of co-operating with typical peer in leisure activity (tapes, computer) and responding to greetings of staff and classmates by waving and/ or smiling.	If he fails to respond to peer's initiation, model and/or prompt appropriate response.
B. Indicates wants/needs by grabbing things in view and tugging on adults for things not in view or out-of-reach.	Anticipate common requests (e.g., bathroom, drink, snack, ball) and structure them into his day.	Objective of using manual signs for bathroom, drink, foods, toys. Objective of tapping shoulder for attention. Teach signs in real situations where he's trying to communicate.	Prompt more sophisticated form (model the sign and/or provide physical prompt); respond to request if reasonable and appropriate. If not, acknowledge request, tell him when he can have what he wants, and redirect to task.

assistant was designated as the person who would carry Larry down the stairs.

Outcomes and Evaluation

Larry remained in the integrated placement. The frequency of his excess behaviors decreased and his self-help, functional academic, communication, and social skills increased over the course of the school year. Whereas at referral tantrums occurred several times daily, they were a rare occurrence by May. Larry continued to display some excess behaviors such as throwing things, and would still cry and hide his hands in his face when faced with new people, places, and situations. He also continued to resist any sort of instructional activity involving isolated skills or massed trial formats.

At baseline in November and again in May, Larry's teacher completed a detailed schedule form which included time by types of activities, grouping arrangements, and a success rating for each of his regularly scheduled activities. Table 1 shows the percentage of Larry's daily activities his teacher rated as "usually successful," "success varies," or "usually unsuccessful." By May, Larry was also involved in several

Table 1

Teacher's Success Rating of Larry's Daily Activities

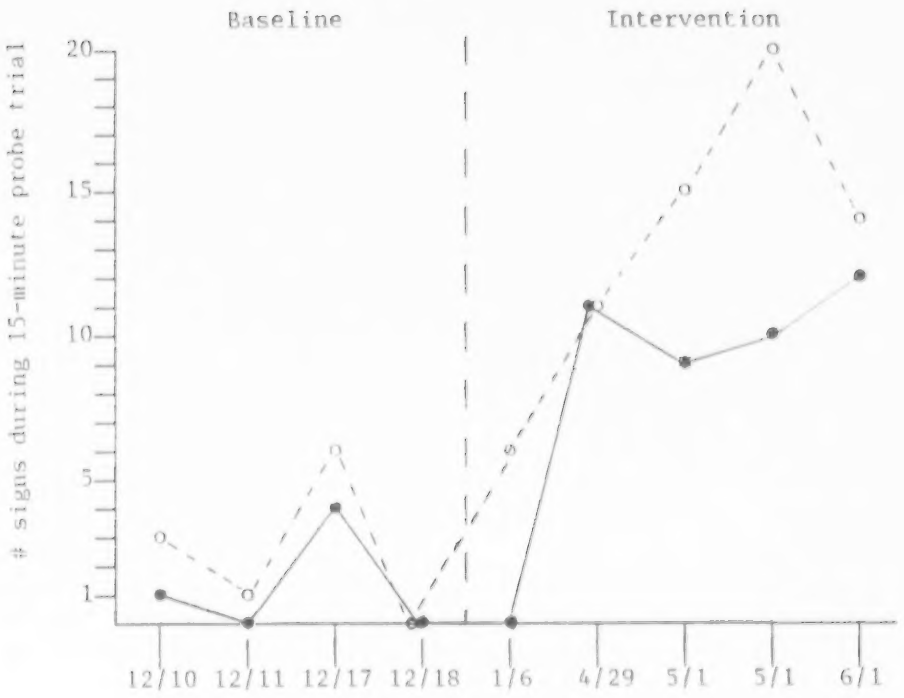
Rating	Nov.	May
usually successful	31%	75%
success varies	46%	25%
usually unsuccessful	23%	0%

integrated recreational activities at the school, including a daily leisure activity with a peer tutor.

Larry completed virtually all of his annual IEP goals by the end of the school year. By May, he was regularly using approximately 12 signs spontaneously, and 15 or 20 more with cues (see Figure 2). Other skills acquired during the year included writing his first name, using a picture schedule with verbal and gestural prompts, recognizing all coins, using a money envelop to purchase lunch in the cafeteria and a money card to purchase a soda from a vending machine, operating a tape recorder with minimal assistance, and setting the table for snack with minimal

FIGURE 2

LARRY'S SIGNING



● = spontaneous or with natural cue

o = any attempt to sign (spontaneous, natural cue, prompt)

gestural prompts.

During the following school year, Larry's teacher occasionally called the consultant for advice about curriculum and instructional issues. Her concerns in these phone calls were not Larry's challenging behavior, but what and how to teach him. She implemented community-based instruction in grocery shopping and general community usage and also sought to better integrate Larry and his classmates into their school by beginning a Special Friends Project (Voeltz, Hemphill, Brown, Kishi, Klein, Fruehling, Levy, Collie, & Kube, 1983).

Discussion

Larry presented a significant challenge to his school district's efforts to provide integrated educational placements for all of its students. The training required to enable his teacher (who was in her second year of teaching) and the educational assistants to meet his needs was essentially training in positive programming for students with autism and challenging behaviors. The training emphasized general information about the characteristics of learners with autism and the development of a community-referenced, functional curriculum (Ford, Schnorr, Meyer, Davern, Black, Dempsey, 1989). The behavioral intervention component focused primarily on strategies for problem-solving about the antecedents of the behaviors of concern and their functions for Larry. In many respects, the consultant served more as a facilitator of the problem-solving process than as an information-giver.

The project consultant was on-site approximately 48 hours between November and June, at a cost to the project of approximately $900. This level of resources input seems reasonable for a school district to make in order to support a student with challenging needs within his or her home school.

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